THE

ORDEAL.

N°. 25.] SATURDAY, JUNE 24, 1809. [Vol. 1.

DANGERS OF AMERICAN LIBERTY.

THE character of the writings of Mr. Ames was original thought. A kind of inspiration seemed to pervade his imagintion, and he expressed his notions without disguise or hesitation. We are therefore frequently honestly told of dangers which, in his opinion, really existed, in terms not very flattering to our national vanity, and for this very reason are they more likely to be true. He has been much abused by a jacobin writer, in the Patriot newspaper, for the posthumous production which has lately been published among his works, entitled 'The Dangers of American Liberty,' because the writer says he can discover in it, an avowed contempt of his own country, devotion to the interests of Great-Britain, and hatred to France. But that writer should be induced to repress his indignant invective from the consideration that Mr. Ames never ambitiously sought offices by means the most base and humble, that those which he ever filled were a source of loss rather than of very great profit to him, and that his principles, however erroneous they might be, were constant, steady, invariable. Hence his foreign partialities, if he had any, were pure; it is the character of the treacherous to change with every revolution of personal ambition. Notwithstanding Mr. Ames entertained opinions unfavourable to the idea that the federalists would ever regain their authority, he did not meanly renounce such a doctrine to facilitate any ambitious views, or advance corrupt designs; of course he could never be mortified by reproach for his political tergiversation and infamy. No, *his* principles were pure, if they were not flattering; he disdained to encourage even his own party to hope for a restoration of power, and it is to be wished that they may follow his exam-

ple in their persevering adherence to their principles. On such perseverence will the safety of the country depend.

The following extract relating to Federal power, may be particularly interesting at the present moment; and will fully serve to evince the *honesty* of Mr. Ames's patriotism, to those who could for a moment entertain a suspicion of it.

"On evidence lamentably clear, I found my opinion, that the federalists can never again become the dominant party; in other words, the publick reason and virtue cannot be again, as in our first twelve years, and never will be again the governing power, till our government has passed through its revolutionary changes. Every faction that may happen to rule will pursue but two objects, its vengeance on the fallen party, and the security of its own power against any new one that may rise to contest it. As to the glory that wise rulers partake, when they obtain it for their nation, no person of understanding will suppose, that the gaudy, ephemeral insects, that bask and flatter no longer than while the sun of popularity shines without a cloud, will either possess the means or feel the passion for it. What have the Condorcets and Rolands of to-day to hope or to enjoy from the personal reputation or publick happiness of to-morrow? Their objects are all selfish, all temporary. Mr. Jefferson's letters to Mazzei or Paine, his connexion with Callender, or his mean condescension to France and Spain, will add nothing to the weight of his disgrace with the party that shall supplant him. To be their enemy will be disgrace enough, and so far a refuge for his fame, as it will stop all curiosity and enquiry into particulars. Every party that has fallen in France has been overwhelmed with infamy, but without proofs or discrimination.—If time and truth have furnished any materials for the vindication of the ex-rulers, there has, nevertheless, been no instance of the return of the publick to pity, or of the injured to power.—The revolution has no retrograde steps. Its course is onward from the patriots and statesmen to the hypocrites and cowards, and onward still through successive committees of ruffians, till some one ruffian happens to be a hero. Then chance no longer has a power over events, for this last inevitably becomes an emperour.

The restoration of the federalists to their merited influence in the government supposes two things, the slumber or extinction

of faction, and the efficacy of publick morals. It supposes an interval of calm, when reason will dare to speak, and prejudice itself will incline to hear. Then, it is still hoped by many, *Nova progenies cælo demittitur alto*, the genuine publick voice would call wisdom into power; and the love of country, which is the morality of politicks, would guard and maintain its authority.

Are not these the visions that delight a poet's fancy, but will never revisit the statesman's eyes? When will faction sleep? Not till its labours of vengeance and ambition are over. Faction, we know, is the twin brother of our liberty, and born first; and, as we are told in the fable of Castor and Pollux, the only one of the two, that is immortal. As long as there is a faction in full force, and possessed of the government too, the publick will and the publick reason must have power to compel, as well as to convince, or they will convince without reforming. Bad men, who rise by intrigue, may be dispossessed by worse men, who rise over their heads by deeper intrigue; but what has the publick reason to do, but to deplore its silence or to polish its chains? This last we find is now the case in France. All the talent of that country is employed to illustrate the virtues and exploits of that chief, who has made a nation happy by putting an end to the agitations of what they call their liberty, and who naturally enough insist, that they enjoy more glory than any other people, because they are more terrible to all.

The publick reason, therefore, is so little in a condition to re-establish the federal cause, that it will not long maintain its own. Do we not see our giddy multitude celebrate with joy, the triumphs of a party over some essential articles of our constitution, and recently over one integral and independent branch of our government? When our Roland falls, our Danton will be greeted with as loud a peal and as splendid a triumph. If federalism could by a miracle resume the reins of power, unless political virtue and pure morals should return also, those reins would soon drop or be snatched from its hands.

By political virtue is meant that love of country diffused through the society and ardent in each individual, that would dispose, or rather impel every one to do or suffer much for his country, and permit no one to do any thing against it. The Romans sustained the hardships and dangers of military service, which fell not, as amongst modern nations, on the dregs of soci-

ety, but, till the time of Marius, exclusively on the flower of the middle and noble classes. They sustained them nevertheless, both with constancy and alacrity, because the excellence of life, every Roman thought, was glory, and the excellence of each man's glory, lay in its redounding to the splendour and extent of the empire of Rome.

Is there any resemblance in all this to the habits and passions that predominate in America? Are not our people wholly engrossed by the pursuit of wealth and pleasure? Though grouped together into a society, the propensities of the individual still prevail; and if the nation discovers the rudiments of any character, they are yet to be developed. In forming it, have we not ground to fear, that the sour, dissocial, malignant spirit of our politicks will continue to find more to dread and hate in party than to love and reverence in our country? What foundation can there be for that political virtue to rest upon, while the virtue of the society is proscribed, and its vice lays an exclusive claim to emolument and honour? And as long as faction governs, it must look to all that is vice in the state for its force, and to all that is virtue for its plunder. It is not merely the choice of faction, though, no doubt, base agents are to be preferred for base purposes, but it is necessary also, to keep men of true worth depressed by keeping the turbulent and worthless contented.

How then, can love of country take root and grow in a soil, from which every valuable plant has thus been plucked up and thrown away as a weed? How can we forbear to identify the government with the country? and how is it possible that we should at the same time lavish all the ardour of our affection, and yet withhold every emotion either of confidence or esteem? It is said, that in republicks, majorities invariably oppress minorities. Can there be any real patriotism in a state which is thus filled with those who exercise and those who suffer tyranny? But how much less reason has any man to love that country, in which the voice of the majority is counterfeited, or the vicious, ignorant, and needy are the instruments, and the wise and worthy are the victims of oppression?

When we talk of patriotism as the theme of declamation, it is not very material, that we should know with any precision what we mean. It is a subject on which hypocrisy will seem to ignorance to be eloquent, because all of it will be received and well

received as flattery. If, however, we search for a principle or sentiment, general and powerful enough to produce national effects, capable of making a people act with constancy, or suffer with fortitude, is there any thing in our situation that could have produced, or that can cherish it? The straggling settlements of the Southern part of the union, which now is the governing part, have been formed by emigrants from almost every nation of Europe. Safe in their solitudes alike from the annoyance of enmies and of government, it is infinitely more probable, that they will sink into barbarism than rise to the dignity of national sentiment and character. Patriotism, to be a powerful or steady principle of action, must be deeply imbued by education and strongly impressed both by the policy of the government and the course of events. To love our country with ardour, we must often have some fears for its safety; our affection will be exalted in its distress; and our self-esteem will glow on the contemplation of its glory. It is only by such diversified and incessant exercise, that the sentiment can become strong in the individual, or be diffused over the nation.

But how can that nation have any such affinities, any sense of patriotism, whose capacious wilderness receives and separates from each other the successive troops of emigrants from all other nations, men who remain ignorant, or learn only from the newspapers, that they are countrymen, who think it their *right* to be exempted from all tax, restraint, or control, and of course that they have nothing to do with or for their country, but to make rulers for it, who, after they are made, are to have nothing to do with their makers—a country too, which they are sure will not be invaded, and cannot be enslaved? Are not the wandering Tartars or Indian hunters at least as susceptible of patriotism as these stragglers in our western forests, and infinitely fonder of glory? It is difficult to conceive of a country, which, from the manner of its settlement, or the manifest tendencies of its politicks is more destitute or more incapable of being inspired with political virtue.

What foundation remains then, for the hopes of those who expect to see the federalists again invested with power?

Shall we be told that if the nation is not animated with publick spirit, the individuals are at least fitted to be good citizens by the purity of their morals? But what are morals without re-

straints ? and how will merely voluntary restraints be maintained ? How long will sovereigns, as the people are made to fancy they are, insist more upon checks than prerogatives ? Ask Mr. *** and judge Chase.

Besides, in political reasoning it is generally overlooked, that, if the existence of morals should encourage a people to prefer a democratick system, the operation of that system is sure to destroy their morals. Power in such a society cannot long have any regular control ; and, without control, it is itself a vice. Is there in human affairs an occasion of profligacy more shameless or more contagious than a general election ? Every spring gives birth and gives wings to this epidemick mischief. Then begins a sort of tillage that turns up to the sun and air the most noxious weeds in the kindliest soil ; or to speak still more seriously, it is a mortal pestilence, that begins with rottenness in the marrow. A democratick society will soon find its morals the incumbrance of its race, the surly companion of its licentious joys. It will encourage its demagogues to impeach and persecute the magistracy till it is no longer disquieted. In a word, there will not be morals without justice ; and though justice might possibly support a democracy, yet a democracy cannot possibly support justice.

Rome was never weary of making laws for that end, and failed. France has had nearly as many laws as soldiers, yet never had justice or liberty for one day. Nevertheless, there can be no doubt, that the ruling faction has often desired to perpetuate its authority by establishing justice. The difficulties however, lie in the nature of the thing ; for indemocratick states there are ever more volunteers to destroy than to build ; and nothing that is restraint can be erected, without being odious, nor maintained, if it is. Justice herself must be built on a loose foundation, and every villain's hand is, of course, busy to pluck out the underpinning. Instead of being the awful power that is to control the popular passions, she descends from the height of her temple, and becomes the cruel and vindictive instrument of them.

Federalism was, therefore, manifestly founded on a mistake, on the supposed existence of sufficient political virtue, and on the permanency and authority of the publick morals.

The party now in power committed no such mistake. They acted on the knowledge of what men actually are, not what they

ought to be. Instead of enlightening the popular understanding, their business was to bewilder it. They knew that the vicious, on whom society makes war, would join them in their attack upon government. They inflamed the ignorant; they flattered the vain; they offered novelty to the restless; and promised plunder to the base. The envious were assured, that the great should fall; and the ambitious, that they should become great. The federal power, propped by nothing but opinion, fell, not because it deserved its fall, but because its principles of action were more exalted and pure than the people could support.

It is now undeniable, that the federal administration was blameless. It has stood the scrutiny of time, and passed unharmed through the ordeal of its enemies. With all the evidence of its conduct in their possession, and with servile majorities at their command, it has not been in their power, much as they desired it, to fix any reproach on their predecessors.

It is the opinion of a few, but a very groundless opinion, that the cause of order will be re-established by the splitting of the reigning jacobins; or, if that should not take place soon, the union will be divided, and the northern confederacy compelled to provide for its own liberty. Why, it is said, should we expect, that the union of the bad will be perfect, when that of the Washington party, though liberty and property are at stake, has been broken? And why should it be supposed, that the northern states, who possess so prodigious a preponderance of white population, of industry, commerce, and civilization over the Southern, will remain subject to Virginia? Popular delusion cannot last, and as soon as the opposition of the federalists ceases to be feared, the conquerors will divide into new factions, and either the federalists will be called again into power, or the union will be severed into two empires."

RULE OF WAR AGAIN.

FROM THE EDINBURGH REVIEW.

"It is contended, that England, has a right to prohibit the neutrals from carrying on any trade during war, which was not open to them during peace. But why should not the same rule extend to a trade of which the neutrals, though permitted by

law, did in fact not partake before the war? It is owing to our hostilities, that the Americans carry wines from Bourdeaux to Amsterdam; they came into this traffick in order to shelter the French and Dutch traders from our cruizers; we have as good a right to prohibit it, as to stop their trade in sugar and coffee. In like manner, the French used to import American produce in their own vessels; now they only receive it in American ships. Instead of a part, therefore, the Americans have the whole of this trade, and England has a right to confine them to their former share of it; but as this is utterly impossible, without stopping it altogether, she may exercise her belligerent rights in the only way practicable, and cut off the Americans from all intercourse whatever with her enemies. This is exactly what the French government has threatened us with; and it must be admitted to follow clearly, from the principles of the rule of the war of 1756. Accordingly some politicians recommend it to England. Now, let us see what follows. We are desired to cut off all intercourse between America and our enemies; this will no doubt injure our enemies, but it will hurt America still more. For we are unfortunately at war with about ten different nations, each of whom will thus lose its American trade: but America will lose its trade with each of them; and will suffer, perhaps, ten times as much as any of them.* Being at war with almost the whole world ourselves, we shall in revenge, monopolize the whole trade of a neutral and friendly power, and indemnify ourselves at its expence. But shall we, in fact, be benefiting ourselves by so singular a conduct? We may call it monopolizing the trade of America, but, in truth, it is equally giving her the monopoly of our own trade; it is confining the Americans to intercourse with ourselves, and ourselves to intercourse with them; for, the keenest advocates of the rule of 1756 admit, ex-

* The learned and ingenious author of '*War in Disguise*, (p. 37, 5th edit.) treats with some contempt the assertion that neutrals suffer hardship in not being allowed to supply themselves with colonial produce in the enemy's island's during war; a hardship, he observes, which they suffer equally during peace. But surely, if one belligerent interdicts all colony trade except her own, the neutrals, instead of having the market for produce open in all the mother countries, are confined to the market of that of one belligerent. If America is prevented from buying French produce, and our market cannot supply her, she suffers as much as France does by the prohibition. And even if she can get a supply from us, she suffers a much greater restriction in her trade than if she were still an English colony.

plicitly, that we have not a shadow of right to partake, under any pretexts, in a trade which we shut against the neutrals. If then we cannot cut off our enemy's commerce, without injuring the Americans a great deal more, so neither can we injure the Americans without hurting ourselves equally; and such, in a few words, is the benefit to be derived, from the complete assertion of our pretended rights towards neutrals.

The progress of the demands which have been made by the assertors of these rights, is exceedingly instructive as to their real views. The transports of produce from the enemy's colonies to the mother country direct, in neutral vessels, is first required to be stopped. The neutral then carries it to his own ports, and from thence to the enemy's. We are required to consider this as one voyage, and an evasion of the first prohibition. A second prohibition is therefore demanded; the produce must be fairly landed and pay duties; and it must not be reexported in the same vessel which brought it. Under all these restrictions however, the neutral can afford to continue the trade; and the produce still finds its way to the enemy, though at very advanced prices. We are now desired, therefore, to enforce the rule of the war of 1756, and to prevent the produce from entering our enemy's ports at all, in neutral bottoms, because, in time of peace, that commerce was interdicted by him. Suppose we again comply, and that the neutrals yield—they will carry the produce to some neutral European port, from which it may find its way to the market; that is, to our enemies. A new demand is therefore necessary. We are required absolutely to prohibit all traffick in colonial produce which came originally from the enemy's colony. Even this would be evaded; for, how is such produce to be distinguished from the very produce sold by ourselves to those neutrals, according to the strict letter of our own navigation law? We must therefore, interdict absolutely, all carriage of colonial produce in any vessels not being British. But this, though sufficient to outrage all publick law, would still be inadequate to prevent smuggling, so long as any traffick remained between our enemies and the neutrals. There is but one other step to take, therefore. We must go to war with the neutrals, and put their ships upon the same footing with those of our enemy, whose places in trade they are now filling. By this chain it is,

that we are driven on from prohibition to prohibition, till we find that the prohibition of neutrality itself is our only remedy; and that we can only trust to the vigilance of our cruizers for the security of our colonial monopoly, and the interruption of our enemy's trade. The case is therefore short and plain. If all nations will not go to war with France, when we choose to do so, we must go to war with them also. There is no other way of vexing our enemy and protecting our mercantile profits."

STELLA.

WE frequently alluded to Stella, a German drama of a most pernicious tendency, in our notes to 'the Rovers, or Double Arrangement,' which we published in the hope of ridiculing the absurdities of such productions. The following account of that celebrated German monster may gratify those of our readers who cannot have recourse to the original.

"Ferdinand, a young nobleman, 'for something, or for nothing,' thinks proper to leave his home, his wife, (*Cecilia*), and an only daughter. He then attaches himself to *Stella*, the heroine of the drama, who abandons her connections, and the prospect of a good estate, to follow this child of inconstancy and ennui. But *Stella* is as little able to fix the wanderer as *Cecilia*, and *Ferdinand* forsakes his mistress with the same *sang-froid* as he had before quitted his wife: he enters into foreign service, and after three years returns to the spot where *Stella* resided. Hither, also, his wife, reduced to distress, had just arrived with her daughter, who was engaged as an attendant in *Stella's* family. They recognize each other, and *Ferdinand* agrees to return to his duty: but how to disengage himself from *Stella?* The following scene, in which the distress seems to be at the height, will shew the result of that determination. It is a *bonne bouche*, and breathes the very spirit and essence of German tragedy.

"STELLA. You terrify me, Ferdinand! You look wildly!

FERDINAND. Stella—I am a wretch and a coward! I lose all my powers when I am with you—I have not the resolution to strike the dagger into your heart, and yet secretly meditate slow poison! Oh Stella! Stella.

STELLA. For heaven's sake!

FERDINAND. *(With bitterness and passion.)* And only not to see your sorrow! not to hear you despair! To fly!

STELLA. *(In a faint voice.)* I can support myself no longer. *(She is sinking, but holds by him.)*

FERDINAND. Stella! whom I hold in my arms! Stella! thou who art all to me! Stella! *(Coldly.)* I leave thee!

STELLA. *(Staring confusedly and smiling.)* Me ?

FERDINAND. *(Gnashing his teeth.)* Yes, thee ! with the woman whom thou hast seen ! with the girl !

STELLA. It grows dark.

FERDINAND. That woman is my wife—*(Stella looks earnestly at him, and falls into his arms.)* And the girl is my daughter ! Stella ! *(He observes that she is fainted.)* Stella ! *(He carries her to a chair.)* Stella ! Oh help ! help !

[CECILIA and LUCY enter.]

FERDINAND. Look ! look at this angel ! She is gone !—See ! O help ! help !

[CECILIA and LUCY are both busied about her.]

LUCY. She is beginning to recover.

[*He looks at them for some time without speaking.*]

FERDINAND. And by your aid ! by your aid ! *Exit.*

STELLA. Who ? Where ? *(Standing up.)* Where is he ? *(She sinks back, and looks round at* CECILIA *and* LUCY *who are still employed about her.)* Thank you ! thank you ! Who are you ?

CECILIA. Compose yourself ; We are—

STELLA. You ? Are you not gone ? You are ? Heaven, who told it me ? Who are you ? Are you ? *(Taking* CECILIA *by the hand.)* No ! I lose myself again !

CECILIA. Dearest, best of women ! Let me press you to my bosom !

STELLA. It lies deep in my soul ; tell me ; are you ?

CECILIA. I am ; I am his wife.

STELLA. *Starting back, and putting her hand before her eyes.* And I !

[*She walks wildly backwards and forwards.*]

CECILIA. Let me conduct you to your apartment."

To rid himself of this awkward embarrassment, though, like Macheath, he would have been extremely ' happy with either, were t'other dear charmer away,' *Ferdinand* sees no alternative but SUICIDE. *Cecilia*, however, [*the wife*] makes a proposal, which is accepted with readiness by all parties, and which, for the sake of the picture we are presented with, the author shall explain in his own words. It does not appear that Goëthe intended the play should conclude with a *dance*, but it certainly is not complete without one.

CECILIA. *(Opens a door, and calls.)* Stella ! *(Stella enters, looks wildly at the pistols, at Cecilia, and Ferdinand. Then clasping Cecilia in her arms.)*

STELLA. Father of mercies ! What is this ? *(Ferdinand starts up, and is running distractedly from them ; Cecilia holds him.)*

CECILIA. Divide with me that heart, Stella, the whole of which belongs to you ; you have saved my husband ; saved him from himself, and you have restored him to me again.

FERDINAND. *(Approaches Stella.)* My Stella !

STELLA. I comprehend it not.

CECILIA. You will know all ; even now your heart explains it.

STELLA. *(Falling on Ferdinand's neck.)* And may I trust that heart ?

CECILIA. Do you thank me for arresting the fugitive ?

STELLA. *(Taking* CECILIA *in her arms.)* O Cecilia.

FERDINAND. *(Embracing both.)* Mine ! mine !

STELLA. *(Taking hold of his hands, and hanging upon him).* I am thine !

CECILIA. We are both thine !" [*The play concludes with this sentence.*]

Some of our readers will no doubt be entertained by the story which serves as '*the prologue to this act.*' It is related by the accommodating wife herself.

" There was once a Count, a German Count, who from a sense of religious duty, left his wife and country to go to the Holy Land. He travelled through many kingdoms, and was at length taken captive. His slavery excited the compassion of his master's daughter ; she loosened his chains ; they escaped together ; she accompanied him through all the perils of war as his page. Crowned with victory, he returned to his noble wife ; but the dear girl *(for he thought humanely)* he did not desert. His high-born consort hastened to meet him, and thought all her faith and love rewarded by folding him again in her arms. And when the knight proudly threw himself from his horse upon his native soil, and the spoils were laid at her feet—' My wife,' said he ' the greatest prize is still behind.' A gentle damsel appeared veiled amidst the crowd : he took her by the hand, and presented her to his wife, saying, ' Here is my deliverer ; she freed me from captivity ; she made the winds propitious ; she attended upon me ; fought by me ; nursed me. What do I not owe her ? here she is ; do you reward her.' The generous wife embraced her, wept on her neck, and cried, ' Take all that I can give. Let him be yours, he of right belongs to you ; he of right too belongs to me ; let us not part ; let us all remain together.' Then falling into her husband's arms ; ' We are your's !' she exclaimed ; ' We are both your's,' they cried with one voice ; ' We are your's for ever ;' and heaven smiled propitious on their love ! the holy vicar pronounced his benediction on them ! and they had but one dwelling and one grave."

Notwithstanding these ludicrous circumstances, and the eccentricity, or rather the absurdity, of the plot, the language is sometimes beautifully poetical, and possesses all the glowing and seductive charms of *Werter ;* but the Germans have, (to us at least) the most singular and unaccountable notions of moral obligation ; every thing is sacrificed to passion and sentiment. The characters in this drama overflow with *sensibility*, but it is a sensibility that hurries them beyond the boundary of virtue. A vigorous fancy, and a warm imagination, are poor apologies for *guilt*.

COMPARITIVE CRITICISM.

MARMION—BY WALTER SCOTT.

Extract from the Edinburgh Review.

WE are inclined to suspect, that the success of the work now before us will be less brilliant than that of the author's former publication, though we are ourselves of opinion, that its intrinsick merits are nearly, if not altogether, equal; and that if it had had the fortune to be the elder born, it would have inherited as fair a portion of renown as has fallen to the lot of its predecessor. It is a good deal longer, indeed, and somewhat more ambitious; and it is rather clearer that it has greater faults, than that it has greater beauties; though, for our own parts, we are inclined to believe in both suppositions. It has more tedious and flat passages, and more ostentation of historical and antiquarian lore; but it has also greater richness and variety, both of character and incident; and if it has less sweetness and pathos in the softer passages, it has certainly more vehemence and force of colouring in the loftier and busier representations of action and emotion. The place of the prologuizing minstrel is but ill supplied, indeed, by the epistolary dissertations which are prefixed to each book of the present poem; and the ballad pieces and mere episodes which it contains, have less finish and poetical beauty; but there is more airiness and spirit in the lighter delineations; and the story, if not more skilfully conducted, is at least better complicated, and extended through a wider field of adventure. The characteristicks of both, however, are evidently the same;—a redundancy of minute description—bursts of unequal and energetick poetry—and a general tone of spirit and animation, unchecked by timidity or affectation, and unchastised by any great delicacy of taste, or elegance of fancy.

But though we think this last romance of Mr. Scott's about as good as the former, and allow that it affords great indications of poetical talent, we must remind our readers, that we never entertained much partiality for this sort of composition, and ventured on a former occasion to express our regret, that an author endowed with such talents should consume them in imitations of obsolete extravagance, and in the representation of manners and sentiments in which none of his readers can be supposed to take much interest, except the few who can judge of their exactness.

To write a modern romance of chivalry, seems to be much such a fantasy as to build a modern abbey, or an English pagoda. For once, however, it may be excused as a pretty caprice of genius; but a second production of the same sort is entitled to less indulgence, and imposes a sort of duty to drive the author from so idle a task, by a fair exposition of the faults which are in a manner inseparable from its execution."

Extract from the Monthly Review.

"From the novelty of its style and subject, and from the spirit of its execution, Mr. Scott's 'Lay of the last Minstrel' kindled a sort of enthusiasm among all classes of readers; and the concurrent voice of the publick assigned to it a very exalted rank, which, on more cool and dispassionate examination, its numerous essential beauties will enable it to maintain. For vivid richness of colouring and truth of costume, many of its descriptive pictures stand almost unrivalled: it carries us back in imagination to the time of action; and we wander with the poet along Tweed-side, or among the wild glades of Ettricke Forest.

Perhaps this is the highest merit of poetry; and to this praise Mr. Scott is most undoubtedly entitled in an eminent degree. His faults, however, are at least equally numerous, if not equally striking, with his excellencies. His fable is generally abrupt, obscure, and, abstracted from the charms of poetry, uninteresting. No proportion of means to effects is observed in the machinery or in the circumstances. The versification, though flowing and easy, is often (we had almost said) *shamefully* incorrect; and not unfrequently, in the midst of the most splendid passage, we are choaked by an unmusical line, or series of lines, deficient in every characteristick of poetry except rhyme, and sometimes even in that mechanical qualification. To these blemishes it may be added that the author carries even his beauties to a faulty excess; that his descriptions of natural scenery are repeated to tediousness; that his knowledge of the manners of former ages occasionally betrays him into pedantry; and that even the proper names of places which convey a peculiar charm to ears that have been versed in the ancient Scottish minstrelsy, are sprinkled so thickly and often with so little meaning as to make the reader, though delighted at first, begin at last to suspect a trick, and to take offence at that which, if managed with a sparing hand,

might have been made a source of unmixed pleasure and approbation.

These are the principal faults of Mr. Scott, to which the general pre-eminence of his former poem almost blinded his readers; and of all these, his extreme carelessness was undoubtedly the most material and the least excusable. We regard it as no extenuation of this errour, that in so many successive editions of the work he has chosen to adopt a motto* which expressing his consciousness of the fact, evinces a blameable spirit of defiance or of indifference to the censure occasioned by it. On the contrary, it more peculiarly behoved him to have studied a greater degree of correctness in any future publication: yet even in the volume before us, in the epistle to William Erskine, which he styles an introduction to his third Canto, he not only acknowledges the same errour, but asserts rather than excuses his perseverance in it.

Were it requisite to state our opinion of the comparative merits of this and the former poem, we should probably say that the peculiar beauties of each are almost equally balanced; that in Marmion the fable is more interesting, and the delineations of character and manners still more strongly and faithfully portrayed; that, on the other hand, we are gratified by fewer touches of pathos and fewer marks of genuine poetical enthusiasm; in short, that, as a whole, it is superiour: but that, taken to pieces, it presents much less that is worthy of our admiration, or that can excite and interest our affections. With regard to the faults, most of those which we have noticed as inherent in the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' are observable, to a much greater degree, in Marmion. The story is so obscure, owing to the abrupt manner in which the several parts are connected together, that it requires a clear head to comprehend it at a single reading; and the instances of incorrect language and slovenly versification become frequent and gross to a most unpardonable extent."

Extract from the Monthly Mirror.

Some persons, self elevated to the critick's chair, have presumed to talk of this poem as much inferiour to the Lay of the Last Minstrel; but thinking that they are judged by a false criterion,

* "Dum relego, scripcisse pudet, quia plurima cerno
Me quoque, qui feci, judice, digna limi."

when compared, we have no respect for such opinions. Had Mr. Scott kept his work by him a little longer, until the love of his offspring had so abated, as to have suffered him to see it through no degree of false medium, Marmion would in every page have been above the censure of all but the envious and malign. We, however, are amongst those who cheerfully obey the humane precept of the Roman, and cannot be offended *paucis maculis*, with a few spots, when so surrounded with effulgence. What Voltaire said of Pope, we do not scruple, after the perusal of the Lay, and this more noble work, to say of their immortal author ---We "never saw so amiable an imagination, so gentle graces, so great variety, or so refined a knowledge of the world," combined in any poet of any age. We have called him immortal, because no other date can be justly given to the wreath which he has woven.

Extract from the Satirist.

The story of Marmion is soon told in *prose*. Marmion, the pretended hero is a bad man, who debauches a nun, practices a forgery, courts an heiress, maintains a lie, combats a real rival, and a sham ghost, insults an aged nobleman, fights a tremendous battle, breaks a toledo, receives a home thrust, gets spilt from his horse, swills water, rants, shouts and dies.

To conclude our review of this uncouth, anomalous and motley performance. We are terribly inclined either to fear, that this poor man is, alas! fast approaching to second childhood; or to guess that he indolently blurted out this doleful ditty, and truly delectable romance merely to amuse those precious 'imps' whom he so sweetly moralizes in his Epistle to William Stewart Rose, Esq.; we rather choose to admit the latter charitable conjecture, since Mr. Scott expressly and candidly says, at the close,

"To thee dear school-boy, whom my lay
Has cheated of thy hour of play,
Light task and merry holiday!
To all, to each, a fair good-night,
And pleasing dreams and slumbers light."